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ANCIENT LITERATURE.

REFLECTIONS ON JUVENAL.

Semper ego auditor tantum? nunquamne reponam,
Vexatus toties.....

Frequently have I been annoyed, and sometimes provoked, by hearing the most foul aspersions profusely lavished on the works of the immortal Juvenal, by persons incapable of judging of the real merits of that Author; but perhaps, my fondness and partiality for that Prince of Satirists, have contributed not a little to excite my vexation and chagrin. From the minute details given by our Author, of the villanies, and iniquities that were practised in his days, some of his accusers have been led to believe that he had something more than a mere theoretic knowledge of the depravity of the times, and have therefore affixed to him the degrading title, of having been "*a rakish debauchee.*" Now, partly a desire to pay some little tribute of gratitude to the memory of Juvenal, as a compensation for the instruction and delight which his pages have often afforded me; and partly a wish to endeavour to free his character from this stigma, have induced me to hazard these reflections and to lay them before the tribunal of public scrutiny, through the medium of your magazine, which, I trust, will always continue to be a repository of erudition and instruction. Even supposing him to have been practically acquainted with the iniquities of his times, he, on that account is certainly entitled to extraordinary merit, for having rescued himself from the *Vortex* of licentiousness, and standing forth as the castigator and exposer of lewdness, in order to excite a disgust of it in his well disposed readers. However, instances could be adduced, of persons being able to display in forcible and glowing language, circumstances with which it never could be conceived they had the slightest practical acquaintance, and minutely describing the vicious habits of the times, and the compunction and remorse generally attendant on the practice of them; and who would insinuate these are any thing else than theoretic descriptions? The great Sterne (though not exactly a case in point,) who stands unrivalled in pathetic descriptions, appears to have been "an actor only;" as some late accounts prove him to have been a person of the most obdurate insensibility. The profligacy of the times was too barefaced and glaring, to pass unnoticed, even by a common observer; and the incensed Satirist, was obliged to make use of language, which was sanctioned by the licentiousness, and lewdness of the age; when, no innuendoes, nothing but plain undisguised truth, could be attended with any beneficial effect. Notwithstanding, I allow,

Si foret hoc nostrum fato dilatus in ævum,
Detereret sibi multa, recideret omne quod ultra
Pudorem traheretur.

His obscenities, however, are completely counterbalanced, by the sound morality which pervades the greater part of his works; and the christian reader, though aided and enlightened by the bright lustre of *Revelation*, may be put to the blush, when he finds his vices and irregularities not only censured and satirized; but himself equalled in the most virtuous conceptions, and moral reflections, by a being assisted merely by the *faint rays* of natural *Religion*. For Juvenal not only lashes at the vices of his own, but (I am sorry to say) of our times also. At present one or two instances must suffice. What author has so convincingly and so beautifully illustrated the futility of those transient and temporal qualifications, which mankind, *even now* so eagerly desire, and so ardently aspire after, as Juvenal has done, in that *Sermonic Lecture*, his tenth Satire? when, at the hazard of his existence, he censured a vicious Emperor, for investing one of the *Histrionic* tribe* with the first offices of state, how applicable to the present day! for we see, not exactly a stage-player,

* The Classical scholar is too well acquainted with this story, to need any particular illustration.

but, as Peter Plymley asserts, "a joker of jokes, an Epigrammatist &c. &c."† not only honoured with high preferment, but lavishing some of the Nation's wealth on whomsoever he pleases, and, indisputably evident it must appear, that the worthless and incapable, occupy those high stations, and reputable employments in the state, which should be entrusted to none but the ingenuous and capable, especially in times so momentous as the present. Though not blind to his defects, were I possessed of talents adequate to eulogise Juvenal suitably as he deserves, I would summon them all up to my aid; and in doing so, I would consider myself honourably employed. This must suffice however for the present. At some future period, perhaps I may submit to the public, reflections on the same author; provided these are deemed worthy of a place in your impartial publication.

Yours, M. F.

ON THE EPISTLES OF PHALARIS.

THE dispute concerning the authenticity of the epistles that go under the name of the celebrated tyrant of Agrigentum, has been long since decided: and learned men are now fully agreed that they are spurious, being, most probably, the production of some of the later Greek sophists, who either through love of money, or for a trial of his own ingenuity, has imposed on the literary world the essay of his imagination as a compilation of the genuine letters of Phalaris.

In our own days, such deceptions are common, and are so easily detected that they scarcely deserve the name of fraud. They are intended by the author and considered by his reader as a means of conveying information so as to attract attention and arrest curiosity more strongly than if delivered by himself. They may be compared to inscriptions on monuments the words of which are supposed to proceed from the body enclosed, and for this reason, make a more lively impression on our minds.

Viewed in this light I have admired the ingenuity with which the writer of het epistles has depicted a likeness of a tyrant; how strongly he has marked those lines which determine the character; how well he has expressed the contending passions which agitate his breast; and the strange though natural inconsistency which forces him frequently to act in a manner so dissonant to the feelings of his heart, and the determination of his better judgment.

The account we have of the extraordinary character who forms the subject of the letters is very short and unsatisfactory. Little more is known of him than that he was a native of Crete, and in consequence of one of those civil commotions, which eternally agitated every Grecian city, that was not bound down by the chains of despotism, he retired to Agrigentum in Sicily, where he found means to usurp the Government, and not only added one to the list of tyrants, of which, as the Latin historian says, no country was ever more fertile, but, if we may credit the accounts given by every antient author by whom he is mentioned, he surpassed them all in ingenious refinements of cruelty.

Yet if we are to believe the writer of these letters, many splendid qualities broke out from among the midst of his vices. Superior abilities as a statesman and general must belong to every usurper, as they are the only means by which he can acquire and possess absolute dominion. But he is represented as possessing in a very high degree some of the domestic virtues, which are generally supposed to bloom only in the humbler scenes of private retirement, but to be too tender to endure the storms and exposure of an exalted situation. His letters to his wife and his son, do honour to the heart that conceived and the head that formed them; and it cannot but excite our regret that the man so well calculated to constitute the felicity of a domestic society, should prefer to become the cause of a nation's miseries and the object of its execrations. The following are translations of the letters alluded to.

TO PAUROLAS.

"Both your parents, my son, merit your love and highest respect, on

† Peter Plimley's letter to his brother Abraham in the country.

account of the favours you have received from those to whom you owe your birth and so many other benefits. Yet a preference is certainly due to a mother beyond a father: for his claims to your gratitude for the cares of education are by no means equal to hers. A mother, besides the pains of birth and the cares of infancy, endures a thousand other anxieties; a father on the contrary, without experiencing any of these troubles, reaps the benefits and comfort of maturer years, refined and perfected by education. To you, above all others, should your mother be dear; as during my banishment she alone underwent the cares of both parents. It is your duty, therefore, to repay to her alone the gratitude due to both your parents: your obligation to your father will be fulfilled by your attentions to her. I claim nothing more for myself, if you perform this part of your duty; on the contrary, your kindness to her will be felt and acknowledged as a benefit by me. Consider also how becoming it will be in you, if the first display of your good intentions towards your father, be shewn in making a return to your mother for all the cares she has so lavishly bestowed on you."

TO THE SAME.

"I have received the crown which you sent me, of six hundred minæ weight; and have accepted it, both on account of the good omen, and from my regard to him who sent it. After having worn it the day on which I offered a sacrifice to the gods of our ancestors for the victory over the Leontines, I sent it as a present to your mother Erythia. I know no person who so well deserves such an ornament as a mother. You may render yourself a more beautiful and honourable crown to us, if your sentiments are suitable to the glory of your parents."

TO THE SAME.

"You have obtained the rights due by a father to a son, my Paurolas; you are wrong in not repaying those due by you to your father, when you have it in your power. I hear that you neglect your studies; a fault for which I have had cause for frequent blame. Should you be deficient in this part of your duty, I shall pay but little regard to the rest. Be assured, if you gratify my wish, that the advantages of Education will accrue, not to me who receive, but to you who bestow the favour."

TO ERYTHIA.

"I have to return you many thanks, my Erythia, both for myself and for our son whom I left with you. For myself, because during my banishment you preferred to remain a widow, rather than marry another, notwithstanding the many proposals made to you. For my son, because you were to him a mother, a nurse and a father: you preferred no husband to Phalaris, no son to Paurolas. Instead of a second husband, retaining your affection for the first; instead of another son, preserving the offspring of your first marriage. Continue still for both our sakes to bestow these favours on him until he shall have attained an age which will render him independent of our care. I make this request of you so earnestly, not as if I doubted the tenderness of a mother, and such a mother, but as a father anxious for his only son. From your own feelings you can form a judgment of a parent's fears for his children, and will grant me your pardon for the manner in which I write concerning him. Farewell."

Other letters on the same subject express similar sentiments. Those also to his friends are equally admirable for their sentiments and the elegance of the language in which they are expressed. That addressed to a physician who had attended him during a severe illness is peculiarly worthy of notice. It is strongly expressive of the fears and suspicions he entertained of all around him.

TO POLYCLITUS.

I know not, Polyclitus, whether I ought more to admire your skill or fidelity. The one has triumphed over a deadly disease, the other has taught you to reject the honour bestowed on the slayer of a tyrant. Your justice incited by both of these has rescued me from the assault of a double enemy, the attack of an inevitable distemper, and the designs of my enemies. For had the disease been fatal, it was completely in your power, by

permitting it to take its course, to have obtained the character of a destroyer of tyrants; had it been otherwise, you might have easily effected the same purpose, by administering improper drugs, as I took with confidence every medicine you offered. But you scorned to prefer unjust gain, to real glory: perhaps also from a principle of piety you thought that the disease which delivered me into your hands, was not a proper means for putting an end to a tyrant. Being therefore in your power to treat me as you pleased, I can never make you a return equal to your merits, and can only say, that your sentiments are worthy of the deity from whom you have received your skill. However together with these well merited praises I have sent you as proofs of my gratitude, four cups of pure gold, two silver bowls of superior workmanship, ten pair of glass goblets, twenty young slaves, and fifty thousand pieces of silver. I have also written to Teucer the president of my household to allow you a pension equal to what the captains of my fleet, my life guards and the colonels of the rest of my forces receive. To these, for want of other means, let me add, the acknowledgement of my inability to bestow on you a reward equal to your services."

In a subsequent letter he pardons a conspirator who had been clearly convicted of a design against his life, through the intercession of Polyclitus.

He appears also to have been a lover and encourager of literature in all its branches. He endeavoured to persuade men of learning to settle at Agrigentum, but seems to have been generally unsuccessful. None of the philosophers except Pythagoras, seem to have acted with the magnanimity of Plato, in exposing their lives through a desire of reclaiming a tyrant. From Abaris the Scythian he received an answer to a proposal of this nature, which, if the letter be genuine, reflects little credit on the writer's character. In several parts of his correspondence, both with the philosophers and others, he confesses that he retains the government which he had usurped, not through any gratification he enjoys from it, but from the fear of the consequences attending his abdication; thus illustrating the celebrated saying of Solon, "that a tyranny is like a fair garden, pleasant to enter, but impossible to be left."

But all his good qualities are tarnished by his cruelty; which he appears to have exerted in many cases from a conviction of the necessity of exhibiting dreadful examples to others, but frequently it seems to have been the natural effect of his own disposition. Of his love of cruelty and his wish to be a complete master of the art of ingeniously tormenting, we have a well known proof in the story of Perillus, but some of his letters show still more curious indications of his skill in that diabolical science. The following may serve for specimens.

TO ALCIBIUS.

"Polyclitus the Messenian whom you accused of treason to your citizens, has restored me from a dangerous malady. I know that this will excite your lamentations and tears. For not even Esculapius the inventor of medicine, together with all the rest of the Gods can cure you. Art removes the weakness of the body, death alone is the physician of the soul. Wherefore for your many and great offences committed against me, not by constraint but inclination, you may depend on my administering this remedy."

TO EVENUS.

"I was at first inclined to kill your son, whom I had taken prisoner, on account of his treatment of the captains of my ships. I afterwards repented and spared his life; for I would rather torment you by permitting him to live, than him by putting him to death. Farewell."

TO HERODICUS.

"Some persons when injured, conceal their intention of vengeance, that they may fall upon the offenders unawares. I, on the contrary, esteem it dishonourable to attack an enemy when unprepared. Wherefore as I have been injured by you, I forewarn you to be upon your guard; I give you this notice, that previous to its infliction, the fear of punishment, and when it comes, the punishment itself may torture you."

These quotations are sufficient to show the character of the book. If it was written, as is hinted already, with the design of conveying a useful lesson, it answers this purpose completely. No declamation against tyranny could excite greater horror and disgust than the perusal of this volume. Considered in this view, it would be well worth recommending it to the perusal of young persons, at a time when tyranny is making such dreadful strides to universal dominion, and when the spirit of liberty, the only power capable of arresting its progress seems to be sedulously repressed and stifled, by those who affect to be its defenders. The language is pure; the stile exhibits to a great degree that pithy terseness which is the peculiar beauty of Attic composition.

REVIEW OF NEW PUBLICATIONS.

The Bard of Erin, and other Poems, mostly National. By James M'Henry. Smyth & Lyons, duodecimo, p.p. 80; price 3s. 4d.

THE Bard of Erin, and several other small Poems, by Mr. M'Henry, have recently been published in Belfast. To dwell with severity on productions, composed under disadvantages of a peculiar nature, as the Author states, and by a young man, would be an invidious task, and very distressing to the writer of this review. Yet however an allowable partiality to an Irishman's compositions may lead us to praise, truth and taste require also to condemn: and where faults are manifest it is necessary to point them out. The author who shows a good deal of poetic genius, may find benefit, the public something to guide, in a review of these poems. The Bard of Erin consisting of 154 lines, is not distinguished by much originality of thought, or strength of idea; the lines flow easily, but there are words in it, and expressions, not quite warranted by the usages of the English language, or at least they are inelegant.

"Rocks and Woods their glimmering shades *bestowed*,
overcome with care,
Oft Erin's genius feels thy influence *dear*,"

are expressions we do not read with pleasure. The passage however, beginning, "ye guardian spirits of my country say," is good and spirited; the term, *barbarity*, is nevertheless extremely obscure, as it is very doubtful, to know the period, or the manner of Ireland's becoming barbarous according to the author's description. The same remark applies to "hostile ignorance."

We have the lines further on;

"Nor feared in numbers all his soul to give,
Sure from his sacred function *then to live.*

This is not elevating the character of the bard; we would much rather have seen the second line run thus;

"And taught his country's acts in verse to live.

Taste hanging on the strings like dew on the plain, is not a happy image. (line 45)

The line

"Neglect, *which breaks your heart and mine,*"

is not poetical, and the whole part from line 20 to 50, though far from wanting merit, disappoints from an indefiniteness of term and meaning, and we can only gather, that Ireland was once covered with glory, and that barbarity and ignorance have injured her.

The poet then complains of the disadvantages of his situation, and informs us that love, and a wish for fame, first prompted his verse, and compares himself, we do not see with what justice, to Caithalore, an Irish Chieftain, who fell in battle.

The passage beginning at line 85, has some parts extremely good, and the sentiment and feeling displayed are highly deserving approbation.

"Howe'er I stand, my fortune's bolts severe,
Still my degraded country draws the tear:
How long Ierne's genius wilt thou mourn,
The wreaths of all thy ancient glories torn!